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Fifty-fifth year

Identical letters dated 26 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the communiqué issued today by the office of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) concerning the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

I should be grateful if you would have it issued as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 31, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Abdallah **Baali**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the identical letters dated 26 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

Communiqué from the office of the current Chairman of OAU concerning the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea

On 24 May 2000, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, current Chairman of OAU, visited the region of the Horn of Africa in the context of the efforts which are being made by OAU for a peaceful settlement of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

This direct involvement of the current Chairman demonstrates the concern of the whole of Africa about the resumption of fighting between the two parties and especially the heavy casualties as well as the sufferings inflicted on hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians.

President Abdelaziz Bouteflika visited Addis Ababa and Asmara between 24 and 26 May 2000. During his stay, he had talks with Mr. Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, and Mr. Isaias Afwerki, President of the State of Eritrea.

These talks with the leaders of both parties enabled the current Chairman to take note of the commitment of Ethiopia and Eritrea:

1. To redeploy their respective forces to the positions held prior to 6 May 1998 in the case of Eritrea and prior to 6 February 1999 in the case of Ethiopia, in conformity with the Modalities, and without prejudice to the final status of the territories concerned, which will be determined at the end of the delimitation-demarcation process.

2. To resolve their border dispute in conformity with the Framework Agreement and the Modalities, on the basis of the relevant colonial treaties and applicable international law, through delimitation and demarcation, with the assistance of the United Nations Cartographic Unit and, if necessary, through arbitration.

3. To pursue negotiations under the auspices of OAU with a view to finalizing the Consolidated Technical Arrangements and thus achieving the implementation of the peace plan constituted by the Framework Agreement, the Modalities and the Consolidated Technical Arrangements.

4. The current Chairman called on the two parties to resume the proximity talks in Algiers on 29 May 2000. Eritrea promptly agreed to that.

The current Chairman of OAU welcomed the points of agreement between the two parties.

The current Chairman also welcomed the decision taken by Eritrea to withdraw from the Zalambesa zone as of 25 May 2000 at 0000 hours as well as the commitment given to him by President Isaias Afwerki that the Eritrean forces will withdraw from Bada and Burrie. This last point has been formalized by a written commitment duly signed by President Isaias Afwerki.

The current Chairman considers that these initiatives taken by Eritrea within the framework of the Modalities will lead to a rapid cessation of fighting between the two parties.

Lastly, he considers that the resumption of the proximity talks in Algiers, as accepted in principle by the two parties, should effectively establish an end to the fighting between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and should be an opportunity to finalize the peace plan and thus proceed to its implementation through a peaceful, just and lasting solution of the conflict between the two brotherly and neighbouring countries.

At the same time, Mr. Ahmed Ouyahia, Special Envoy of the current Chairman, has been sent immediately to Addis Ababa to inform Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of the Eritrean party's acceptance of the Ethiopian demand in respect of:

- The sovereign decision of Eritrea to withdraw from Bada and Burrie, without prejudice to the rights of each of the parties which emerge from the settlement of the border dispute in conformity with the Framework Agreement and the Modalities.
- Mr. Ouyahia will also confirm to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi Eritrea's agreement to go to Algiers on 29 May 2000 to resume the proximity talks.